

Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant

Site Specific Advisory Board

Special Meeting Minutes

October 23, 1998

Members of the Site Specific Advisory Board (SSAB) met with Energy Secretary Bill Richardson October 23, 1998, at 3:30 p.m. at the United States Department of Energy (DOE) Site Office.

The following board members were present: Nola Courtney, Mark Donham, David Fuller, Vicki Jones, Ronald Lamb, Ray McLennan, Bill Tanner, and Gregory Waldrop. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson was present. The ex officio member present was Jimmie Hodges. The DOE federal coordinator present was John Sheppard. Also present was Shelley Hawkins.

Jimmie Hodges introduced Energy Secretary Bill Richardson to the members of the SSAB and explained to the Secretary that the SSAB has been functioning for two years in Paducah. Hodges said the SSAB has made significant contributions to the program. He said it provides a cross-representation of the community and has helped in developing an understanding of the public's perspectives on cleanup.

Secretary Richardson gave the SSAB members a chance to voice their concerns to him.

Vicki Jones said her main concern was over the budget and in making sure Paducah does not get lost in the Oak Ridge Operations area of the budget. She said she would like to see Paducah get a fair share of the budget to fund cleanup.

Secretary Richardson said the work on the design of the uranium recycling plant will start in 1999. He said he had just announced a \$6 million grant for worker retraining and regional economic development for Paducah. Richardson said the DOE cares about issues related to health and safety and is not going to forget about Paducah.

David Fuller said he appreciated hearing the news about the uranium plant. He said he was concerned about autonomy and coordinating better between events. Fuller said Paducah and Portsmouth were unique examples in the complex and it was difficult to blend all the operations of Paducah with others that do not exist elsewhere. Fuller said he would like to see some measure of autonomy for unique sites because things sometimes get lost in the translation. He said it might be helpful for Paducah to deal with some things on its own such as labor/worker issues. Fuller said Oak Ridge is nothing like Paducah and he would like to see better coordination between DOE Headquarters and Paducah.

Hodges explained to Richardson that Paducah money comes out of a decontamination and decommissioning fund and Paducah must compete with Oak Ridge and Portsmouth for funding. He said he thought Fuller desired better local control because our contract is the same as the one in Oak Ridge.

Ronald Lamb said his main concern was the cleanup and funding of the plant because he is a neighbor of the plant. Lamb said he was afraid the Accelerating Cleanup Plan would not allow enough funding for the cleanup to be thorough. He said he worried that there was too little time and money allocated for cleanup. Lamb said he would like the DOE to be more concerned with the people in relation to the sites.

Mark Donham said he lived approximately 15 miles downwind of the plant and his main concern was about air emissions and groundwater contamination. He said he was concerned about plutonium and neptunium emissions from the plant and that there was no pollution control on trichloroethene. He said higher levels were allowed to be emitted at Paducah than at other DOE sites. Donham said there needs to be more emphasis on cleaning the source of groundwater contamination rather than on the pump and treat facilities.

Bill Tanner said his main concern was that there were too many players in the funding and approval process. He said he would like to see things controlled at Paducah to accelerate cleanup. Tanner said he would also like to see more progress on stopping the sources of groundwater contamination.

Nola Courtney said she was concerned with how things were prioritized. She said sometimes when something could be done to save money down the road, it does not always correlate with what is best for human health and the environment. Courtney said legacy waste was a concern for her and she wanted the DOE to consider the best route for human health and the environment in cleanup. She said groundwater contamination and air emissions also were concerns for her.

Gregory Waldrop said he was apprehensive about the Accelerating Cleanup Plan. He said he would like to see Paducah have more local control. He said he was pleased with the cooperation and good relations with the local DOE. Waldrop said he would like to see more focus finance-wise.

Ray McLennan said his main concern was funding. He said he was not sure Paducah was getting its fair share of the budget since it is mixed in with Oak Ridge. McLennan said he would like to see the prioritization list changed. He said he would like to see more progress toward a safe environment now and, in the future, and would like to see more SSAB and DOE involvement in the end use of the plant. McLennan said he would also like to see more of the money being spent on cleanup instead of administration.

After all the members spoke, Richardson asked the members how the DOE could be a better neighbor in improving quality of life. Courtney said there seems to be a lack of pervasive concern about the plant in this region. She said she is amazed at how little people in this region know and that the SSAB may be obliged to let the public know. Courtney said the public seems to think there is no depletion of natural resources.

Richardson then asked the SSAB about their environmental concerns and members responded that their main concerns were groundwater contamination, legacy waste, and methodology for cleanup. Richardson asked Hodges what was being done onsite for groundwater remediation. Hodges said remediation is done on a solid waste management unit (SWMU)-by-SWMU basis. He said the DOE is looking at sources onsite. He said the C-400 Building now has ongoing characterization. Hodges said new technologies are being considered in dealing with the contamination onsite. He said the concerns are very valid and it has been a source of frustration in how quickly the problems are being handled. Hodges said air emissions are relatively small in terms of radiation dose and groundwater is the much bigger risk to the population.

Richardson asked what could be done about air emissions. Hodges said it would be helpful to gain the

confidence of the public and assure the public that Paducah has acceptable emissions.

Richardson also asked the members about their feelings on community input. Courtney said there is a lack of concern with the public because some of the threats may not have immediate effects. She said many people in this area are concerned about the economic impact of the plant and see job preservation as the priority. Courtney said she did not think the DOE was the sole owner of this issue. Hodges said the DOE is part of the issue in terms of its secrecy in the past. McLennan said he thought the local media were afraid to report any negative news on the plant.

Lamb said he is concerned with health issues because he has seen lots of neighbors sick and wondered what the relation of the illness was to the plant. Hodges said the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has conducted a health assessment on Paducah that is due after the first of the year. Hodges said the DOE has allocated \$30 million for health studies around its complexes, and there are ongoing studies on the environment and former employee health.

Richardson said he knew the plant was located next to the West Kentucky Wildlife Management Area and asked if the plant and wildlife coexist well. Waldrop said recent studies have found polychlorinated biphenyls in the wildlife and this has alerted ongoing studies. Donham said he would like to see more research on the wildlife and environment and to see if bioaccumulation was occurring and Courtney agreed. Hodges said a biological program has been funded at Paducah. Waldrop said the SSAB once tried to connect with the hunter population through a survey. He said there has been some recent alarm, however, as some of the wildlife has been dying.

Richardson said he was very interested in these concerns and considered public input important. He said the DOE would try to do better with the concerns that had been presented. He said the DOE would regrettably not be able to make the decision on the Atomic Vapor Laser Isotope Separation (AVLIS) plant at Paducah since this was the United States Enrichment Corporation's decision. Richardson said he appreciated the efforts of the SSAB and also appreciated the members taking time from their day to come speak with him.